

UNDERSTANDING ELECTIONS & CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

Engaging with Candidates and Elected Officials

Presenter: Lex Paulson, Professor of Rhetoric and Political Thought,
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Lesson Description

Political scientist and lecturer Lex Paulson examines strategies and tactics for getting the attention of candidates running for political office and government officials. Lesson highlights include four steps for preparing to meet with an official and the five things to do at the meeting to get the best results.

Lesson Overview

1. How to engage with a candidate or elected official
2. Specific steps to take to prepare for a meeting with a candidate or elected official
3. Best practices for conducting oneself and business during the meeting

Discussion Questions

1. Many people have lots to say about politicians and government officials - particularly when they're trying to get through a complicated bureaucracy. But what if you have just 10 minutes with your president, governor, or mayor? Identify specific issues, supported by facts and figures, that you would want addressed and come up with a list of specific actions you would want your government to take to solve the issues. Practice a 5 minute pitch with your peers.
2. During an election cycle, candidates typically tell the voters what they stand for. Have you ever seen or heard a candidate's "manifesto"? Can you name one or more campaign promises or pledges that candidates said they would do? How closely have they come to keeping their promises? And if they haven't, do you know why? How would you go about finding the answers?
3. Discuss how candidates for election can be held accountable for their campaign pledges after the election is over. Think about ways to stay engaged with a candidate and how to encourage the participation of important constituencies when an elected official takes office.

Development Actions

1. Identify an issue affecting your community for which you need government support. Craft a plan for how you would "lobby" officials in your government to address the problem, remembering to develop a specific plan. Practice conducting this meeting with people you knows. Then work on getting a meeting with the official based on the steps outlined in this lesson.

About the presenter: **Lex Paulson** is an attorney, professor, writer, and consultant in international governance, most recently for UNICEF, the National Democratic Institute, and the Corporation for International Private Enterprise. Trained in political theory at Yale, Cambridge, and the Sorbonne, he served as legislative counsel in the 111th U.S. Congress, organized on four U.S. presidential campaigns, and has additionally worked as a volunteer attorney for Lawyers for Children America. His work as a facilitator and trainer in the international arena includes work with NGOs and governments in India, Egypt, Uganda, Burundi, Niger, Ghana, Congo-Brazzaville, Benin, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire, on issues related to democratic engagement and accountable government. Lex studied political science and the humanities at Yale. After receiving a master's degree in political theory at the University of Edinburgh, he studied classics at Pembroke College, Cambridge during a law degree earned with honors from the University of Connecticut, and is currently pursuing his doctorate in political philosophy at the Sorbonne.